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INFO RUEHDS/AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA PRIORITY 8648  
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SUBJECT: CODEL DREIER IN KENYA: MEETING WITH OPPOSITION  
MEMBERS

¶1. (SBU) SUMMARY: During their July 5 meeting with CODEL Dreier in Nairobi, opposition leaders emphasized the constraints on their effectiveness imposed by insufficient resources and limited understanding of the opposition's legitimate function. KANU party members Justin Muturi, Chief Opposition Whip and MP from Siakago, Joseph Lagat, MP from Eldoret East, Abdul Bahari, MP from Isiolo South, and Samuel Poghismo, MP from Kacheliba shared with CODEL Dreier the challenges facing them, in particular inadequate staffing of committees and the still-developing approach to opposition politics. CODEL Dreier is in Kenya as part of the U.S. House of Representatives Democracy Assistance Commission (HDAC) program. END SUMMARY.

#### OPPOSITION POLITICS

¶2. (SBU) Led by Muturi, opposition members appreciated the opportunity to interact with CODEL Dreier and learn about U.S. Congressional operations. In particular, they were interested in the role of the opposition. In Parliament, Muturi explained, MPs are expected to have a hand in creating legislation, however, under Kenya's parliamentary system, there is very limited scope for "private members" (opposition) to introduce bills. MP Bahari expressed concern that the government did not know how to handle opposition and coalition politics, decrying the practice of co-opting members of the opposition and ignoring promises to coalition partners. Bahari added that because the government controls the distribution of resources, the opposition is at a disadvantage.

¶3. (SBU) Conversely, Poghismo commented, the opposition too, needs to better understand its function. It would be better, he continued, if instead of knee-jerk resistance to any government-supported initiative, opposition members took more carefully considered positions. Representative Dreier agreed, noting how frequently there is bipartisan consensus on issues before Congressional committees. Muturi added that even bipartisan committees, in particular the ones which rely on objective reports from other branches of the government, have demonstrated a high degree of impartiality and did not have difficulty reaching consensus. Poghismo hoped that Kenyan political parties would develop into "real" parties in which members are committed to the organization and its positions.

COMMITTEES HAMSTRUNG

¶4. (SBU) Another challenge faced by the opposition, and Parliament more generally, is the inadequate staffing level of committees. Muturi lamented that a committee may have just one staff member, who is not necessarily assigned based on his or her technical expertise or training. Lagat explained that the shadow cabinet system is also affected by staffing shortages. Without adequate support, he noted, it is difficult for shadow ministers to properly fill their watchdog role. Representative Holt asked the Kenyan MPs what type of staff, partisan, professional, or committee-specific, would be most useful. Muturi responded that professional staff would be best, and as it stands, the few staff there are have been appropriately bipartisan.

¶5. (U) CODEL Dreier has not cleared this message.  
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